

THE NEW
Methodical, Easy and Complete
DENE SYLLABARY.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

(1) These letters are not differentiated in Dene. (2) \sim is the nasal *n*. (3) χ is the French *j*. (4) \mathfrak{s} is phonetically intermediate between \mathfrak{sh} and *s*.

The vowels as in Italian, except \varnothing as the *e* in Fr. *je, te*. — The *r* of *Kr, Kr* is hardly perceptible. *Y, Y* are very guttural. *R* is the result of uvular vibrations. *Kh, Th* = *k+h, t+h*. *Q* almost = *ty*. *L* is a peculiarly sibilant *l*. The dot accompanying consonants represents the exploding sound (rendered by *<* incorporated in the signs). * is prefixed to proper names, and ° is suffixed to syllables the vowel of which it is necessary to render long. The rest as in Engl.

• YOU are respectfully requested to read the following carefully.

SOME OF THE Advantages of the New Syllabary.

I.— The direction of the curve or angle of each sign *infallibly* determines the nature of the vowel added to the fundamental consonant of each syllable, and this direction is *always* perceived without the least effort of the mind. In the Cree Alphabet such as given in Petitot's *Grammaire raisonnée*, this direction on which depends the vowel of the syllable is either difficult to discern or governed by no fixed rules. Thus, in that Syllabary, **▷** points to the right, **◁** to the left, **↑** upwards, **↓** downwards, *though the consonants expressed by these differently turned signs are ALL in connection with the SAME vowel A.* Hence confusion—with co-relative difficulty—for the mind of the pupil.

II.— All the cognate sounds are rendered in the new syllabics by similarly formed characters the general shape of which denotes the phonetic group to which they belong, while their intrinsic modifications determine the nature of the particular sound they represent. Thus the dentals are expressed by a single curve; the gutturals by a double curve; the soft sibilants by a curve with undulating extremities; the hard sibilants by a double curve with like extremities, etc. Therefore our 30 sets of letters are practically reduced to 9, viz.: **▷ C D E L Q C S E**. So that the pupil who has become familiar with these 9 signs may almost be said to have mastered the whole Alphabet; for another good point in its favor is that

III.— The modifications of each fundamental character take place *internally* and in conformity with *logical* and therefore easily learnt rules. To illustrate this remark, we will refer to the sign **Ξ**. The student who already possesses the aforesaid 9 principal signs will recognize it at sight—through its double undulating curve—as a hard sibilant which, being affected by no modification, must be given the primary hissing sound *Sa*. Let us now insert therein the perpendicular line which, when used as an internal accretion to a sign, corresponds to the *h* of the Roman Alphabet (as in **Λ hra**, **Λ hwa**, **□ tha**, **Θ kha**), and we obtain **Ξ sha**. Should we cross the end of its horizontal line, we will thereby add a *t* to that sign which will then become **Ξ tsha** or *cha*. In like manner, **Ξ** may be changed into **Ξ tsa** which in its turn is liable to be transformed into **Ξ tsə**. **C**, **E**, etc. may also become **Ϲ**, **Ͼ**, etc. —This logic and consequent facility are sadly wanting in the old Syllabary which is made up of disconnected signs many of which are differentiated only by additional and *external* smaller signs (**▷ Σ ḷ Ḯ b Ḳ Ḵ Ḷ Ḵ ḵ**) most of which are also used as non-syllabic letters, and as such sometimes have in that same Alphabet a meaning quite different from that which is attribu-

ted to them when they are considered as mere accessories. This arbitrary change of value joined to the fact that these modifying signs sometimes precede, sometimes follow, the main character must unavoidably confuse the mind of the beginner and render the acquisition of reading unnecessarily difficult.

IV.—In our system, all the small signs (except o which, as its form indicates, is zero when alone) are consonants without vowel, and in no instance is any of them used in another capacity. They have always the same value, and the method and logic which we have noticed in the formation of the main or syllabic signs have also presided to the composition of those which are merely consonantal. Thus the non-syllabic gutturals are expressed by vertical lines (y, v); the nasals by semicircles (ɔ ɔ ~), &c. Note also the transformation of s into \$, sh; z into ʐ, zh or j, etc. through the insertion of the i or modifying h of the large characters. —The old Alphabet not only lacks this method and resulting simplicity, but it would seem as if its inventor had purposely contrived to render its acquisition unduly difficult to the white student by giving to s the value of l, to z that of g, to h that of f, etc.

V.—The new Syllabary is complete, while it is universally conceded that the Cree Alphabet lacks about half a dozen sets of syllabic signs which are indispensable in such delicate languages as the Dene. Those who know the numberless and most ridiculous *contresens* this scarcity leads to need no other reason to reject the whole system as practically worthless. Besides, in connection with *none* of its signs is there any provision for such important vowel sounds as those of œ (French *e muet*) and u (oo, Fr. *ou*). Yet in several dialects œ characterizes the present tense and ʐ the past, while the distinction between œ and u is no less essential.

VI.—Lastly, we claim for our Syllabary a greater synthesis which renders the writing shorter and, by avoiding the accumulation of non-syllabic signs, makes the reading easier. For instance, the Chippewayan word *intan-chare*, "leaf" which with the old syllabics cannot be written without three consecutive small signs (Δ Y C I V E Z) is simply ▷ O C ~ E ▷ with the new system.

In conclusion, we may be permitted to state as illustrative of the practical worth of the new Syllabary that through it Indians of common intelligence have learnt to read in one week's leisurely study before they had any Primer or printed matter of any kind to help them on. We even know of a young man who performed the feat in the space of two evenings.

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